EPA Environmental Education Grant Program:

2012 Request for Proposals for Regional Model Grants

September 2012 Webinar

This webinar provides a general overview of the current RFP and the Environmental Education Grant application process. Please consult the Solicitation/RFP Notice for complete details.

This will be the only RFP issued by EPA's Office of Environmental Education in Fiscal Year 2012.

Send questions to EEGrants@epa.gov
NOTE: Deadline for proposals to RFP is November 21, 2012

The Environmental Education Grants Program

The Environmental Education Grants Program, sponsored by EPA's Office of Environmental Education (OEE), Office of External Affairs and Environmental Education, provides financial support for projects which design, demonstrate and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods and/or techniques.

The purpose of the Environmental Education Grant Program is to:

- Increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues

- Promote environmental stewardship

- Provide the public with the skills needed to weigh various sides of an environmental issue and take responsible actions

The EE Regional Model Grants RFP

- Deadline **November 21, 2012**: hand delivered by COB; post marked by that date; submitted to grants.gov by 11:59pm EST that date.

- One award per each of EPA's 10 Regions

- Approximate amount of each award: $216,000

- Proposals must be for model, replicable EE programs

- Fewer educational and environmental priorities

- Renewed emphasis on expanding the conversation

Model, Replicable Projects:

- Advance and strengthen the field of environmental education

- Are easily replicated in other settings – i.e., in a variety of geographic locations, with various audience types, in different educational settings (formal and/or non-formal), etc.

- Are models of quality practices, methods, and/or techniques

- Create a vision for how to inspire behavioral change and promote environmental stewardship

Who is Eligible to Apply?

- Any local education agency, college or university, state education or environmental agency, or a *tribal education agency.

- A nonprofit organization as described in Section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

- A noncommercial educational broadcasting entity as defined and licensed by Federal Communications Commission.

- Applicant organizations must be located in the United States or territories and the majority of the educational activities must take place in the United States; or in the U.S. and Canada or Mexico; or in U.S. Territories.

*"Tribal education agencies" that are eligible to apply include a school or community college which is controlled by an Indian tribe, band, or nation, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and which is not administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Educational & Environmental Priorities:

- **Educational:**
  - Community Projects
  - Human Health and the Environment
  - Career Development

- **Environmental:**
  - Protecting Air Quality
  - Assuring Safety of Chemicals, Preventing Pollution
  - Cleaning Up Our Communities
  - Protecting America's Waters

What Else Do Applicants Need to Know?

- Matching (non-federal) funds valued at 25% of the total project budget are required.

- Awards made in Regions only; none from HQ

- Applicants must demonstrate that proposed project has not been previously funded by EPA – or is being significantly changed, expanded, broadened or enhanced.

- Multiple proposals accepted so long as each is for a different project and each is separately submitted.

- EPA encourages applications for funding of projects that provide a variety and range of educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences as compared to the pool of previously funded projects in each Region. See projects previously funded by this program at: **www.epa.gov/education/grants/index.html#grants=4**

What the EE Grants Program Will & Will Not Fund:

Funded:

- Environmental education projects based on sound science that teach or enhance critical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that lead to responsible actions to protect human health and the environment.

<u>Not</u> funded:

- Projects that advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action about environmental issues or simply disseminate information.
- Lobbying or political activities.
- Non-education-related research or development.
- Technical training of environmental professionals.
- Construction projects.

Budget and Cost Items:

- **Matching Funds:**
  - 25% of <u>Total</u> Budget
  - For example, EPA funding request = $216,000, Total Budget = $288,000, Match = $72,000

- **Indirect Costs:**
  - E.g., rent, admin/office support
  - Cannot be reimbursed without indirect cost rate agreement…or…
  - **New in 2012** – EPA can allow flat 10% rate for non-profits

- **Contracts and Sub-awards:**
  - Generally, contractual services in funded projects must be competed.
  - Sub-grants (sub-awards) generally do not have to be competed; may not be used to avoid competing contractual services.
  - Sub-grants (sub-awards) under <u>this RFP</u> may not be made for $5,000 or less.

More Budget & Cost Items:

- **Program Income:**
  - Money a grant recipient earns as a direct result of a grant-supported activity (e.g., workshop fees)
  - Usually used to pay for project costs that are eligible and allowable, and further project goals.
  - May also help finance the required matching funds.

- **Food/Beverage Costs:**
  - Allowed for "working" breakfast or lunch, or light refreshments during breaks
  - NOT allowed for evening receptions, banquets, or when alcohol is served, entertainment provided or funds solicited.

- **SF-424A and Detailed Budget:**
  - Both required; make sure dollar amounts match each other exactly.

Partnerships:

- NOT required

- BUT, partnerships can strengthen recruitment plans by increasing potential numbers and diversity of audiences, can increase the variety of and accessibility to expertise needed to create a model project, and can assist in meeting the matching funds requirement.

- Up to 6 points given for Partnership Letters of Commitment in review and scoring of applications.

Expanding the Conversation:

- Environmental challenges require a population that is diverse, informed, and environmentally literate.

- Every community needs citizens willing and able to use critical thinking skills to solve problems to protect their local environment.

- Includes low income, minority, and tribal communities.

- Includes communities more likely to be adversely affected by environmental risks.

Content & Format for Applications/Proposals:

Content of Proposal Submission – Please submit <u>only</u> the following documents in this order:

<u>Standard Forms</u>
- Standard Federal Application Form (SF-424)
- Budget Form (SF-424A) - Section B only - EPA share, matching share, and total

<u>Work Plan</u>
- Project Summary Sheet –recommended 1 page – possible **3 points***
- Project Description (use headings: what, why, how, who) – possible **40 points***
- Project Evaluation (how you will measure success) – possible **10 points***
- Detailed Budget –Same order and categories as 424A, but with much greater detail. Check against Form 424 and Form 424A to ensure amounts are same. – possible **14 points***

<u>Appendices</u>
- Timeline – Major activities and milestones over project period – possible **6 points***
- Logic Model - Shows outputs and outcomes – possible **6 points***
- Programmatic Capability and Past Performance – possible **15 points***
- Partnership Letters of Commitment – Explain tasks or funding they will provide – possible **6 points***

*Possible maximum points that could be given by reviewers for each part of the proposal.

Review & Selection for Funding:

- All eligible applications are evaluated by a Regional panel; a possible score of up to 100.

- Applications are ranked from highest to lowest score.

- Regional Selection Official is briefed on score, ranking and *other factors that may be considered for final funding selection.

*Other factors may include the EPA educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences that are addressed in the highest ranked proposals.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Please review the FAQ's online at: http://epa.gov/education/grants_faq.html**

- **Send all questions to: EEGrants@EPA.gov**

Questions Submitted for this Webinar

- Is there any limit to the percentage of matching funds that can be in-kind contributions?
    - No, there is no limit.
- Are salaries allowed as matching funds? Is there any limit to the percentage of the requested grant funds that can be used for salaries? Is there a specific way that salaries need to be stated in the matching funds section?
    - Yes, salaries can be used as match. No, there is no set limit, but we do say in the Tips for Grant Applicants (on our website at http://epa.gov/education/grants/index.html#grants=2 to "be cautious about including what might appear to be excessive personnel or travel costs and high overhead expenses; your budget must be competitive." Just be sure to clearly identify in the detailed budget the sources of all matching funds.
- Can office equipment be used as in-kind match?
    - The RFP says: "The match must be for <u>allowable costs</u> and may be provided by the applicant or a partner organization or institution." In addition, "this value must be carefully documented."
- What are the reporting requirements during the award period?
    - Quarterly reports giving brief summaries of progress, semi-annual reports giving more detailed indices of progress (including budget), and a detailed final report (including outputs, outcomes, and budget) are required.
- Is there more emphasis on reporting quantitative <u>outputs</u>(e.g., number of workshops given, number of people educated) vs measurable <u>outcomes</u> (e.g., project participants becoming environmental stewards in the way they lead their daily lives)?
    - The semi-annual and final reports should include quantitative outputs and short to mid-term outcomes. Longer term outcomes that can reasonably be projected may also be included.

Questions continued….

- Could you give us some examples of programs that have been funded in the past?
  - All the projects we have funded since 1992 are listed with short descriptions on our website at http://epa.gov/education/grants/index.html#grants=4
  - Note however that we have never funded projects such as the one we are soliciting in this particular RFP.
- What is the average level of granted funding for each program?
  - Under this particular RFP we are funding projects for approximately (but no greater than) $216,000. We do not expect to fund projects for much less than $216,000 either.
- Please give more detail on what would be categorized as "Advocacy promoting a particular point of view or course of action" under ineligible activities.
  - Though there can sometimes appear to be a fine line between advocacy and EE, a project advocating for new legislation on a particular environmental issue, for example, rather than educating its audience on how to solve an environmental problem, would be ineligible.
- Would it strengthen our proposal if we were to do _____ rather than _____?
  - We cannot comment on the merits of a proposal idea.
- We are an educational 501 (C) 3 and a residential Quaker school. Are there eligibility issues regarding our status as an educational institution founded on religious principles?
  - The fact that you are a 501C3 makes you eligible; the religious aspect is irrelevant.

Questions Continued…

- How do you know when something needs to be competitively bid?
  - Generally subgrants do not have to be competed but contracts do. If a service is being performed in partnership with the grant recipient, generally a subgrant is appropriate. If a service is being performed under complete direction by the grant recipient and is being purchased commercially, generally a competitive bid process must be employed.

- Is a Municipal Utility Authority eligible to apply for the regional grant opportunity?
  - To be eligible you must have the authority to conduct education programs. You can demonstrate this authority by providing documentation from your state department of education, referencing the law or bylaws that established your agency, quoting your current official mission statement, and/or showing us proof that your authority has been set by practice of education programs in the past.

- Would an indoor environmental focus be appropriate under the category of community projects and community-focused stewardship activities?
  - If I am understanding this question correctly, then yes, indoor as well as outdoor environmental issues would be appropriate as community projects.

- Do community-focused stewardship activities need to focus on just teachers and/or students or could they include other community members receiving EE?
  - Yes, community members of any age could qualify as audience members in a project funded by this grant program – and not just teachers and/or students.

Questions Submitted for the 9/5 Webinar:

Q: We are part of a collaboration of non-profit environmental education centers. We have "camps" to which we bring groups of school kids for 2 to 5 day residential EE programs. Can the EPA EE grant funds be used to support **residential** EE programs conducted for upper elementary and middle school students?

    A: From what you describe, yes it sounds like this sort of residential program would be eligible. If you apply and intend to conduct your project as a collaboration of partners, be sure to get partnership letters of commitment from the other "centers". The letters can be worth up to 6 points total in the review process (see Section V of the RFP).

Q: We are a 501C3 with a school garden grant program. We solicit funds through grants and corporate contributions then redistribute 100% of those funds for learning gardens and workshops at schools in our county. In essence, this makes us a third-party funder. Could we apply for this EPA grant under this condition?

    A: It sounds like you intend to redistribute the EPA EE grant funds through sub-grants and that your program has both educational and environmental goals. From what you describe, it sounds like your project would be eligible to apply for a grant under this solicitation. Read the entire RFP carefully to make sure your project adheres to all requirements, especially Section IV(F) on Contracts and Sub-Awards. Note that we cannot allow any sub-grants to be awarded for $5000 or less under this RFP.

Questions continued…

Q: If our organization does not have an indirect cost rate, should we adjust the budget in our application to allow the addition of IDC later, if awarded?

A: An applicant can begin the negotiations for an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement at the same time that they apply for a grant to this program, or within 90 days of the date of an award of a grant under this solicitation. However, recipients are not allowed to seek reimbursement for indirect costs until an approved indirect cost rate is obtained, so if you want to charge indirect costs to the grant, it's best to start getting that in place now. If you are a 501C3 non-profit, and if you choose EPA as your cognizant agency, EPA can allow you to charge a flat indirect cost rate of 10% of salaries and wages (see 2 CFR Part 230, Appendix A). Note, however, that recipients who opt to use the 10% flat rate are obligated to use the flat rate for the life of the grant award. Either way, if you don't have an IDC right now and think you will be asking for one, then, yes, factor that into your budget.

Q: The total allotted to each EPA Region is $216,000, yet past awards indicate much smaller grants were awarded in our region. Is the regional grant much larger than past years or is it common for the region to award several smaller projects instead of the entire amount in one grant?

A: This year's RFP is different from past regional EE grant award program RFPs in several ways - one of them being the larger dollar amount for the award, and another being that there will be just one award made per Region.

Questions continued…

Q: Can an EE grant be used for an education program that targets primarily adults, with little or no K-12 component; e.g., to educate homeowner associations, civic groups and elected officials on wastewater management approaches?

    A: Yes, EE grants can be used to educate adults. See Section I(B), quoting the National Environmental Education Act: "The Office of Environmental Education shall…support development and the widest possible dissemination of model curricula, educational materials, and training programs for elementary and secondary students and other interested groups, including senior Americans."

Q: Can local governments be applicants for EE grants? I see government entities (e.g. cities) listed as prior grant recipients on your website but I don't see them listed as Eligible Applicants under Section III.A. of the RFP?

    A: As we say in response to a similar question in the FAQs: The RFP states that "any local education agency...may submit a proposal." The Environmental Education Act does not define a "local education agency". The term is defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. If there is any question as to whether you are a local education agency, you can check with the state department of education in the state in which you are located. For purposes of applying for a grant through this RFP, make sure it is clear in your application that you have the authority to conduct education programs. You can demonstrate this authority by providing documentation from your state department of education, referencing the law or bylaws that established your agency, quoting your current official mission statement, and/or showing us proof that your authority has been set by practice of education programs in the past. Be sure to include this information in a succinct statement in the Project Summary and in the Project Description, as well as in detail in the Programmatic Capability and Past Performance section of the application.

Questions continued..

Q: Can we apply for a grant in one region to replicate a project that was previously funded by the EPA EE Grants program in another region?

 A: Applicants must demonstrate that their proposal is for a project for which they (the applicant) have not been previously awarded a grant by EPA's EE program; or the applicant must demonstrate that they are expanding, broadening or otherwise enhancing a project previously funded by EPA's EE Grant Program in such a way that it could serve as a replicable model of environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. In addition, EPA encourages applications for funding of projects that provide a variety and range of educational and environmental priorities, geographic areas, and audiences as compared to the pool of previously funded projects in each Region. Go to the EPA website www.epa.gov/education/grants/index.html#grants=4 to see the list and descriptions of proposals previously funded by this program.

Q: Can we apply for funding in one region that would include EE activities in another region?

 A: You must apply for funding in the Region in which your project will take place. If you will be conducting a project with activities in multiple regions, apply to the region in which the most activities will take place, or if all are equal, apply to the region in which you are located.

Q: Can we apply for funding for an outreach project that includes global issues such as the support of sustainable fishing? Would this be considered "protecting America's waters"?

 A: We say in the RFP that "Applicant organizations must be located in the United States or territories and the majority of the educational activities must take place in the United States; or in the U.S. and Canada or Mexico; or in U.S. Territories. " We also do explicitly state, as you say, that water issues should address "Protecting America's Waters". So if you address a global issue in your project, make sure there is a local focus.

Resources for Conducting Excellent Projects:

- If you are training educators: *Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators,* www.epa.gov/education/resources.html

- If you are developing materials:
  - **The "*Guidelines for Excellence in EE*" series of publications listed at www.epa.gov/education/resources.html**
  - The *Ocean Literacy Framework* at http://oceanliteracy.wp2.coexploration.org/?page_id=47
  - **The *Energy Literacy Framework* at www1.eere.energy.gov/education/energy_literacy.html**
  - The *Climate Literacy Framework* at www.globalchange.gov/resources/educators/climate-literacy

- When developing your evaluation plan: *My Environmental Education Evaluation Resource Assistant* at http://meera.snre.umich.edu

Tips for Success:

- Show that proposal fits the criteria of the EE grants program.

- Demonstrate past successes.

- Show your qualifications.

- Include culturally-diverse and/or under-served populations.

- Demonstrate partner support.

- Demonstrate adequate resources (in-kind or matching funds).

- Include plan to measure progress and success.

- Write simply and clearly.

- Do not assume reviewer knowledge.

- Simplify, edit, shorten (page limits).

- Explain acronyms/terms.

- Explain rather than declare.

- Organize application around scoring criteria.

- Provide clear, concise information in ALL of the requested areas – if you leave something out the reviewer cannot give you points for it.

And…

- <u>Start early</u> – Leave time to review and edit your proposal.

- Read the RFP (solicitation) and online FAQs thoroughly before beginning your proposal/application.

- If using grants.gov to submit your proposal, have your Authorized Organization Representative register NOW.

- Send questions to EEGrants@epa.gov – <u>after</u> you read the RFP and FAQs thoroughly!

Where Do I Find More Information?

www.epa.gov/education/grants

At the Environmental Education Grant website you will find:

- Frequently asked questions
- Grant writing tips
- Application forms
- Past projects that have been funded

This webinar is intended to provide a general overview of the Environmental Education Grant Program and application process. Please review the Solicitation/RFP Notice for complete details.

- For general information about the Environmental Education Grant Program please contact Karen Scott at **scott.karen@epa.gov**

- For questions about the current Environmental Education Grant Solicitation/RFP please contact: **eegrants@epa.gov**

Thank You!